1:Takakura H-4, 5 (no date) 1960 AB6 Ainu AB6
Feudal Japan AB2

III. THE REVOLT OF 1789

1. GROWTH OF THE *BASHO* CONTRACT SYSTEM AND THE CHANGE IN EZO ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The Japanese who came to have an advantageous position over the Ezo after the 1669 incident profited further by the great change in the Ezo industrial system brought about by this very incident. This was due to the growth of the *Basho* contract system for trade previously carried on by the clan or by *Chigyōnushi*, now passed into the hands of merchants called *Basho* contractors. The basis of the Matsumae economy lay in the Ezo-Japanese trade because, unlike other Japanese clans who could rely on agriculture, the Matsumae inhabited a land not suited for agriculture. The clans in Japan were dominated by farmers who had acquired control by force while in Matsumae territory it was the merchants who acquired power by force. But while the Matsumae merchants were superior to the local hunters and fishers in power and ability they were, in comparison with the mainland merchants, merely local small time traders. The mainland market where goods for the Ezo trade were bought and sold was dominated by the merchants of Central Japan. Thus the Matsumae were not go-betweens in the trade between the Ainu and the mainland markets, but just go-betweens in the trade between the Ainu and the mainland merchants. The relationship between the *Chigyōnushi* and the mainland merchants may have started as a commercial one in which goods were bought and sold for the Kyōto-Ōsaka regional market, but as the mainland merchants invested more capital in the trade and as the Central Japan traders began to operate branch offices in Hokkaidō, from the second quarter of the seventeenth century on, the Matsumae clan became dependent upon these merchants. The natives borrowed capital and a year's supply of food from these traders and paid off in whatever game they caught.[1] The *Chigyōnushi* did the same in that they borrowed from the merchants not only necessary capital for the Ezo trade but also the money needed for an entire year's operation and they repaid the merchants from what they earned in the native trade.[2] With the rise in the standard of living of the samurai plus the cunning of the mainland merchants, the *Chigyōnushi's* debts increased until the Ezo trade fell into the hands of these traders from Japan. Under the name of *Basho* contractors they paid a certain sum in taxes or money for the privilege

[1] "People from local areas were eager to borrow any amount of gold, silver, rice, salt, etc., to employ a crew and hire a boat. After the February equinox they would fish and the catch would be sent to the creditors, who, in a body, would price the hauls." *Tōyūki* (Record of a trip to the East).

[2] "Income from the land was not grain or fish but credit from the merchants with whom the price of land use had been set as 100 or 200 kin for a given area. No money changed hands but daily necessities were supplied by the merchants." *Chihoku Gūdan* (The northern allegory).